

Executive Summary

Introduction

Principles

Recommendations

Design Guidelines

Implementation

Appendices

I n t r o d u c t i o n

Introduction

An Historic Opportunity

The creation of the San Diego River Park is an unprecedented opportunity to take the first steps toward reconnecting the San Diego region with its namesake waterway. With the guidance of the San Diego River Park Foundation and support of the San Diego River Coalition, the San Diego River Conservancy, the San Diego River Park Alliance, and the people and members of interested organizations who live within the watershed, the Park is on its way to becoming a reality. The San Diego River Park will aim to shift how the river is envisioned and understood throughout its watershed, and the City of San Diego is at the forefront of this effort. Envisioned as a waterway that is healthy, accessible to the public and active with wildlife, the San Diego River can reassert itself as the focus of the valley and an asset to the community. The river can once again become a place to visit, live, work and play in the valley itself.

Vision

The San Diego River today is an impacted and managed system severely altered and constrained by mining, flood control and increasing development pressure. Commercial, residential and industrial uses have expanded in the valley floor, encroaching on the river's edge. Although mining activities are being phased out of the valley, flood control and development pressure remain constant issues. These conflicting needs in the valley have compromised not only the integrity of the river and the wildlife habitat it supports, but also the value of the river as a community resource.

The establishment of the San Diego River Park can reverse this trend; it will return the river to the people, integrate the river valley into the life and landscape of San Diego. As the water and the rich alluvial floodplain drew the Kumeyaay people to the valley thousands of years ago, a healthy riparian environment interspersed with trails, parks and open space, all united by a flowing, clean river, will draw the people of the San Diego region back to the river.

This new park will create a string of parks linked by open space, trails, and green corridors; a multi-layered system that will serve a variety of needs, offering recreational, environmental and habitat benefits. This system of 'interconnected parks' has proven successful across the nation, in Minneapolis' Chain of Lakes, Boston's Emerald Necklace and Esplanade, and Denver's Park and Parkway system.

The San Diego River Park will draw upon San Diego's coastal location, enhancing the ocean edge that has historically defined the City and extending this character inland. It will allow people to see and interpret

the river's natural transitions as it flows from mountain to canyon to ocean, making the river processes visible and accessible to all visitors. Creating the River Park must also look beyond the bounds of the City and this study area. It is essential to understand the context of the entire watershed system and the canyons and creeks that are tributary to the San Diego River. The efforts to clean the river, create habitat connectivity and trail continuity must consider all of the areas that link to it and all waters that flow into it.

The experience of nature and City will be joined together in the San Diego River Park system, creating a natural corridor within the urban milieu. Like San Diego's other great parks-- Balboa, Mission Trails and Mission Bay—the San Diego River Park will provide a natural resource that becomes a part of the day-to-day life of the City, a place of the City rather than a place apart from the City.

Project Origins

The vision for the San Diego River Park is the culmination of many years of effort and discussion by dedicated members of surrounding communities. The concept of preserving the river valley as a dedicated and protected open space first generated discussion in 1975 when Kevin Lynch published *Temporary Paradise, A Look at the Special Landscape of the San Diego Region*. This report reflected the author's subjective observations of the regional landscape; while the report resulted in little action, it did lay the groundwork to begin thinking of a long-term vision and plan for the river valley.

In 2001 The San Diego River Park Foundation was formed to coordinate the efforts of the many community groups and other organizations dedicated to the San Diego River and to work toward making the San



Dog Beach at Ocean Beach

Diego River Park a reality. A community-based, grassroots non-profit organization, the Foundation provides organizational and financial support to projects that will help to establish this river-long park. The Foundation works with local groups to encourage stewardship of the riparian environment and supports projects that will restore and enhance the river, provide community facilities, and create opportunities for citizens to learn about the rich history of the San Diego region.

In the same year, Mayor Dick Murphy of San Diego invited Federal, State, County, City of San Diego and City of Santee elected officials to form the San Diego River Park Alliance. The Alliance provided support on political issues relating to the creation of the San Diego River Park, and hopes to see a San Diego River Park extending from its headwaters in the Cuyamaca Mountains to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean.

With the support of the San Diego River Park Alliance, the Coastal Conservancy and the San Diego Foundation, the San Diego River Park Foundation and San Diego River Coalition initiated an effort to develop a Conceptual Plan for the entire San Diego River corridor. Engaging the 606 Studio program, a group of third year graduate students and faculty in the Department of Landscape Architecture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, a framework was created through extensive community workshops throughout the river corridor. The result of this effort, the San Diego River Park Conceptual Plan, outlines the broad goals and objectives for the San Diego River Park, focusing on the stretch from El Capitan Reservoir to the Pacific Ocean. These goals, synopsized in the following pages, serve as the basis for the preparation of this Master Plan focusing on the river within the City of San Diego. The Conceptual Plan was approved by the San Diego River Coalition and unanimously accepted by the San Diego River Park Alliance.

The effort to protect, preserve and enhance the San Diego River and its watershed was spearheaded by six organizations, listed below.

San Diego River Park Foundation

The Foundation is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that is the host and chair of the San Diego River Coalition meetings. It acts in the capacity of a resource to the numerous groups working to establish the San Diego River Park and to the community in general. It is a central repository and clearinghouse for information and maintains the www.SanDiegoRiver.org web site.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Principles

Recommendations

Design Guidelines

Implementation

Appendices

San Diego River Coalition

The mission of the San Diego River Coalition is to preserve and enhance the San Diego River, its watershed, and its natural, cultural, and recreational resources. This coalition of non-governmental organizations acts as the Citizens’ Advisory Committee for the San Diego River Park. The Coalition holds public meetings to discuss progress and potential projects with many of the governmental and quasi-governmental entities working on river issues in attendance and with active citizen participation.

San Diego River Conservancy

This new state agency, created to work on the entire length of the San Diego River Park, has a governing board of nine voting and two nonvoting members. The Conservancy’s members include state officials, local elected officials, and community members.

San Diego River Park Alliance (Inactive)

Formed and chaired by Mayor Dick Murphy, this organization addressed policy issues relative to the establishment of the San Diego River Park. Members of the Alliance included local, state and federal elected officials, the Executive Director of the San Diego River Park Foundation, and Helix Water District, which has significant land holdings along the San Diego River.

Select Committee on Parks and River Restoration (Inactive)

Chaired by Assembly Member Christine Kehoe, this group included other members of the California Assembly interested in park and river issues. The Committee studied how the State of California could best assist with issues related to the San Diego River.

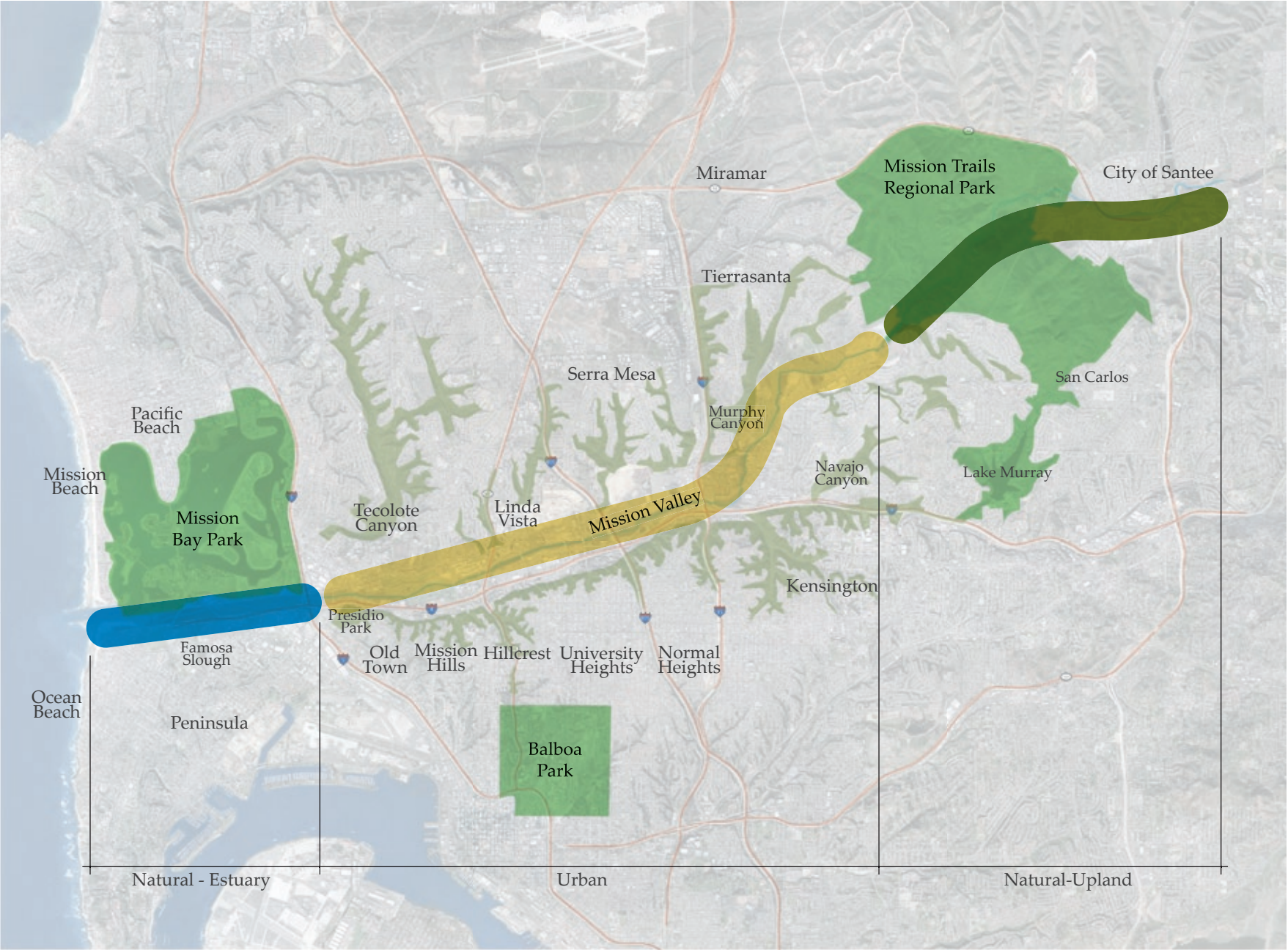
San Diego River Watershed Workgroup

A County-led workgroup, this body includes interested individuals, organizations, and agencies who are working to develop a management plan for the San Diego River Watershed. Although the Workgroup’s efforts are separate and distinct from the San Diego River Park, this group will incorporate the San Diego River Park into its plans.

Project Description

In September of 2003, the City of San Diego initiated a nine-month study to prepare a plan for the San Diego River within the City of San Diego. This effort, the San Diego River Park Draft Master Plan, is spearheaded by the Civitas consulting team and will provide guidance to the City of San Diego in taking the incremental steps necessary to implement the San Diego River Park.

This Plan will also inform the City’s ongoing planning processes and assist City and outside agencies in working toward a healthier river environment. The Plan will construct a framework that adjacent communities can use to set policy on riverfront land uses within their boundaries and encourage coordination between San Diego River Park planning and other future development along the length of the river corridor.



City of San Diego Context

The Master Plan planning area includes both public and private property, and it should be noted that private property owners have specific property and development rights. The Master Plan supports working with these private property owners to determine the course of future development and re-development projects. The Master Plan seeks to implement the goals of the river park in a way that will meet all approved plans and goals while also respecting each land owner's rights.

Report Organization

The Master Plan report is organized in three major sections: Principles, Recommendations, and Implementation.

The seven Principles will guide the City's San Diego River Park planning and implementation. These principles are the overarching goals against which all decisions should be tested.

The Recommendations section identifies a series of recommended actions and projects that are necessary to move the Plan from concept to reality. These recommendations are divided into two sections that deal with the river as a whole, and with the unique needs of each river section, or reach. It is important to note that while each recommendation fits into a larger, comprehensive vision for the river, no single recommendation is meant to address every location or every situation along the length of the river corridor. The Master Plan's single overarching recommendation is one of flexibility, seeking opportunities as they arise with property owners to implement the Plan's ideas.

The Implementation section of the document describes the potential phasing and prioritization of the recommended actions.

This report is the synthesis of a nine-month process. Much more work remains to bring the entire San Diego River Park to fruition. Additional studies, outlined in the Implementation section of this document, will follow this Master Plan effort.



Planning Area

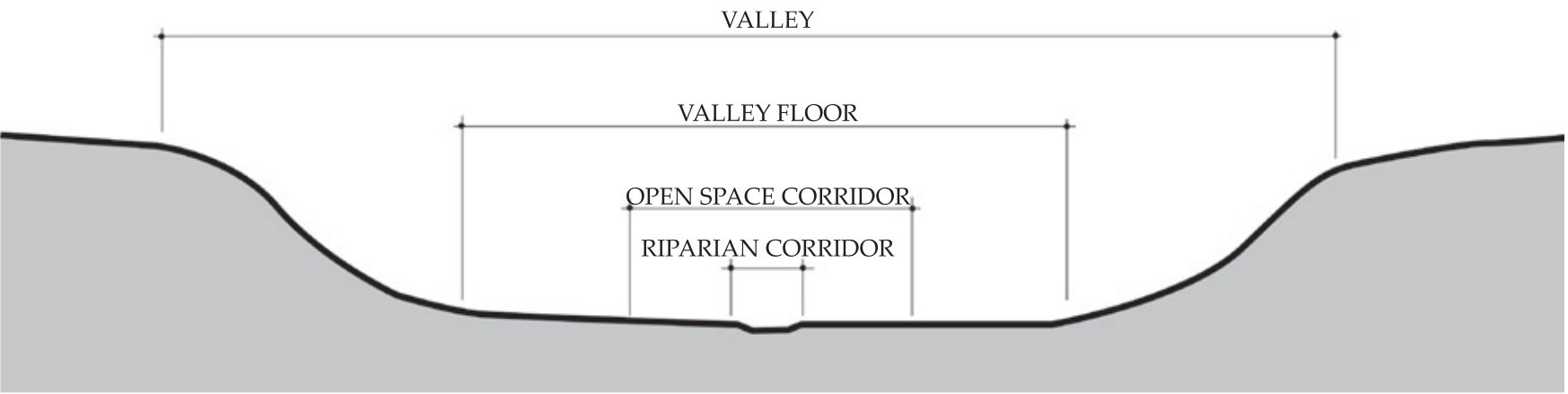
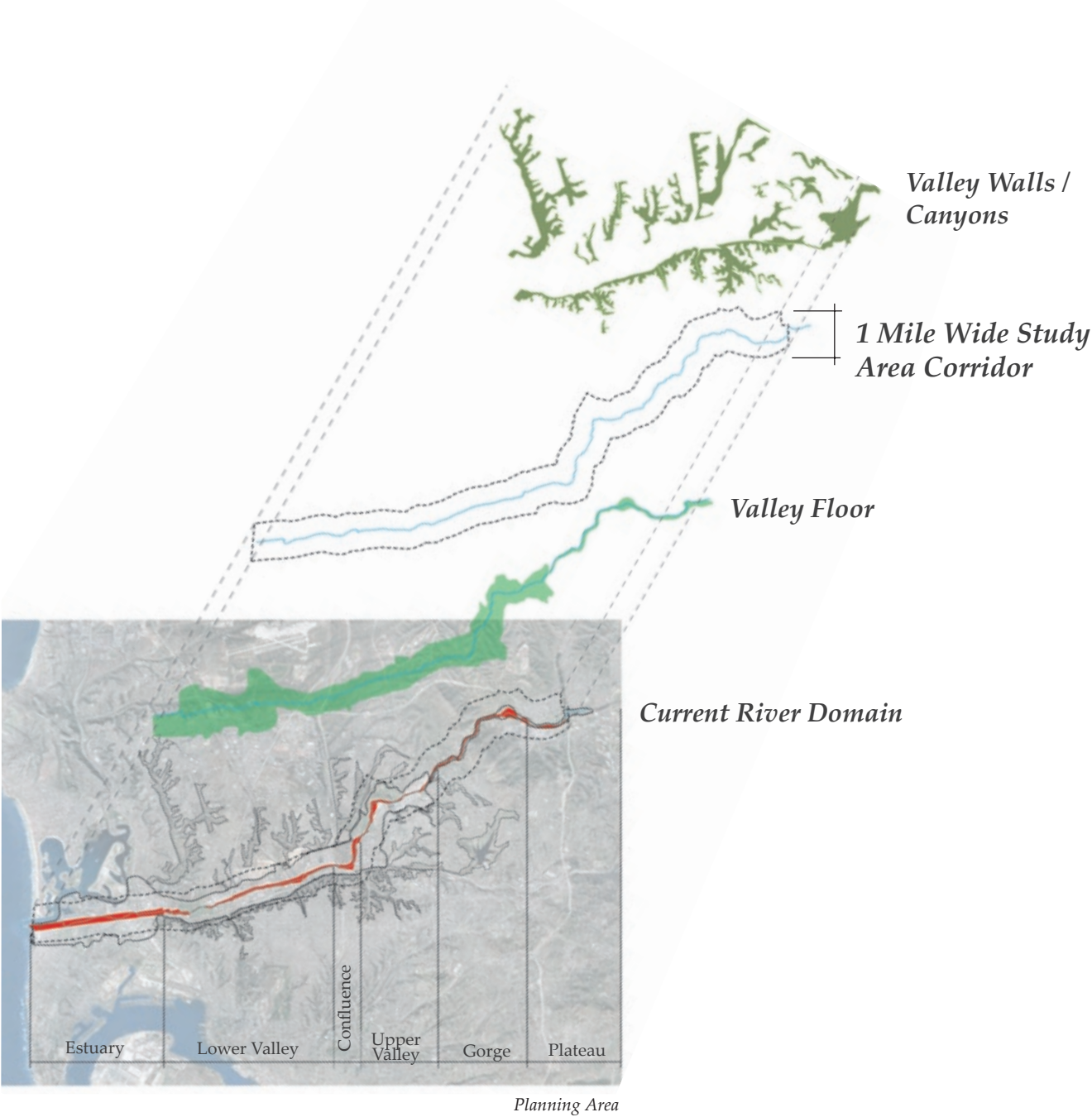
The Plan focuses on the section of the San Diego River within the boundaries of the City of San Diego extending from the Pacific Ocean at Mission Bay to the City of Santee. The project area is defined as a corridor extending one-half mile on each side of the river. This one mile wide area is consistent with that defined by the San Diego River Conservancy to where funding can be applied. However, the area of interest and influence extends well beyond this half mile limit. To be comprehensive, the Plan must consider the area of influence. This area relates to the topography of the river valley, its adjacent canyons and the remaining open space of the uplands. Tecolote Canyon, Murphy Canyon, Ruffin Canyon, Alvarado Canyon and Navajo Canyon are areas that offer significant potential to substantially improve connections between the canyons and the San Diego River valley.

The project area is bookended by two major parks, Mission Bay Park and Mission Trails Regional Park. These parks have significance not only to the city, but to the region and beyond, and can be linked by the San Diego River Park. The resulting context is an urban river corridor framed by the natural estuary and natural upland character of Mission Trails Regional Park.

One of the great challenges of creating the Park lies in the fact that much of the land along the river is in private ownership. It is critical that efforts are made to work with the owners of these parcels to open the corridor to public access, either through acquisition of key parcels or by establishing easements. The river floodway, the area that has historically experienced periodic flooding, is of particular importance as it provides water quality buffer, habitat, and recreational space.

A large amount of land adjacent to the river lies in highway, street and utility rights-of-way. This land, often considered a ‘leftover’ and factored out of the overall landscape equation, offers further opportunities to increase habitat and landscape connections.

The Plan divides the river corridor within the City of San Diego into six subsections, or reaches, based upon topographic characteristics and river condition. These reaches include the *Estuary* (extending from the ocean to the Mission Valley Preserve), *Lower Mission Valley* (extending east to I-15 and including Qualcomm Stadium), the *Confluence* (of Alvarado and Murphy Creeks with the San Diego River), the *Upper Mission Valley* (extending from Friars Road Bridge to Mission Trails Regional Park), the *Gorge* (within Mission Trails Regional Park), and the *Plateau* (upstream and east of Mission Trails Regional Park). There are issues and potentials that are shared by all of the reaches as well as those specific to each individual reach.



Components of the San Diego River Valley



Estuary



Lower Valley



Confluence



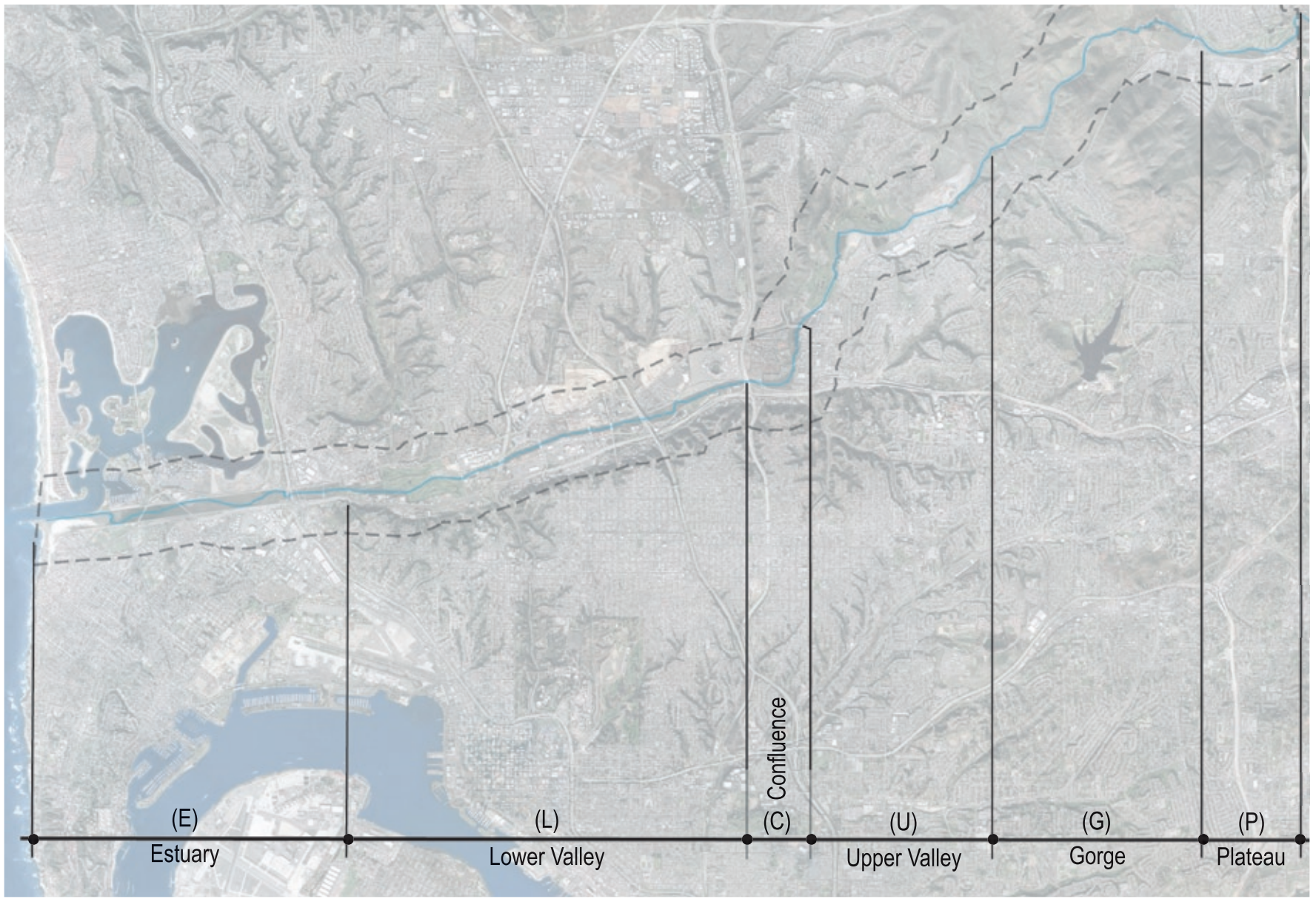
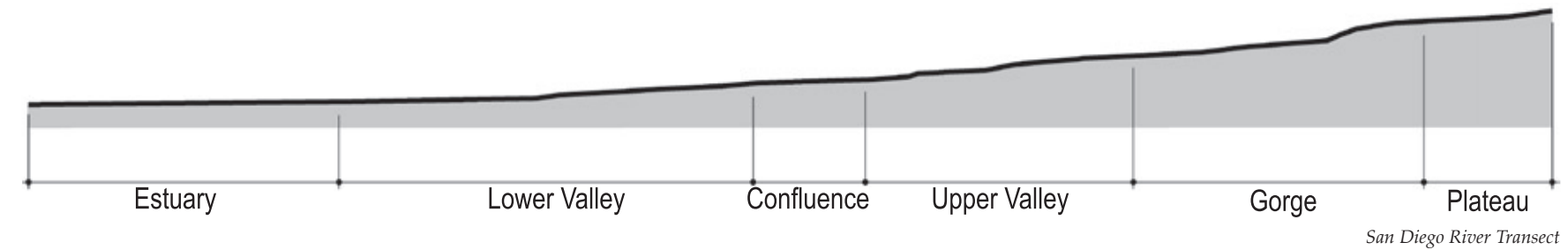
Upper Valley



Gorge



Plateau



Six Reaches within the City of San Diego

Executive Summary

Introduction

Principles

Recommendations

Design Guidelines

Implementation

Appendices

Project Benefits

Creating a series of linked open spaces will benefit the City of San Diego in many ways. The most significant benefit will be the contribution of the San Diego River Park to help define the character of the City of San Diego. As the structure of the canyons and mesas influenced the original settlement of the region, the valley can once again provide an organizing element of nature on the scale of the City and build upon its beaches.

The San Diego River Park will improve water quality, as well as enhance the day to day quality of life for residents using the corridor for play, fitness, and commuting.

San Diego is and has always been defined by its relationship with the ocean. The San Diego River Park will engage that edge and draw it inland as it interprets the large-scale role and function of the river. Much as Central Park defines New York City, the combined power of the river valley and the coastal beaches define San Diego and should be a part of the daily experience of the city.

A New Identity. The San Diego River Park’s most significant benefit may be its ability to create a new way to see the city. By linking two of the area’s richest natural and recreational resources, Mission Bay Park and Mission Trails Regional Park, the San Diego River Park Trail will offer a new way to play and move through the city. A link to Balboa Park will connect the river corridor into the heart of the City. The San Diego River Park stands to become as vital a resource as the city’s other great parks. By connecting these three parks, the San Diego River Park will create a great source of pride and a new identity for the city.



Platte River corridor “before”

Direct Benefits. The San Diego River Park will unify the city. Every neighborhood in and adjacent to the river valley should connect to the San Diego River Park, linking each of these neighborhoods to the city’s other great parks. In addition, developed parks are proposed within the valley itself, offering an even larger spectrum of experiences to park users. It will also connect isolated pockets of development along the river with established neighborhoods, knitting the valley as a whole and cultivating a valley identity.

Ecological Benefits. Today the wildlife habitats within the river valley are disconnected, impaired and isolated from upland habitat. This Park offers the opportunity to reconnect existing habitat within and across the valley. By reconnecting wildlife habitat the ecological health of this system can be improved. To be successful, much of the habitat must remain protected from human encroachment. A balance must be found that increases awareness of the fragility of the system and educates river valley visitors about the wildlife and habitat of the valley.

Educational Benefits. Currently, most of the native habitat within the valley is out of sight and out of reach of humans, and is therefore disconnected from the daily experience of San Diego visitors and residents. The creation of the San Diego River Park offers many opportunities to educate communities about the river’s natural systems and its historic significance. Many community groups are already involved in this effort; the process of creating the San Diego River Park increases the opportunities for these groups to become engaged with improving these resources.



Platte River Corridor, 2003

Schools and universities can also benefit from the first-hand experience of using the San Diego River as an outdoor classroom. By engaging Scripps Institution of Oceanography, San Diego State University, University of San Diego and other institutions, a science-based coalition can be created that can study the river and build upon each others’ work in the valley, and give input to the parks’ design and management.

Potential Economic Benefits. By creating the river park and improving the condition of the river’s health, property values will be enhanced. The Park will become an asset that will leverage higher quality land uses in the future.

There are a number of sites along the river that are isolated from the neighborhoods. The river gives these properties an identity and address within the valley and may encourage redevelopment with an orientation to the river.

There will be direct benefits to the City from the increase in property value and from the increase in pedestrian/tourist activity in the valley. Further benefit should be anticipated by an increase in private reinvestment in response to the presence of the park. Analysis of these benefits is an important next step to determine how to balance the cost of acquiring land and developing the park within the anticipated economic benefit.

The San Diego River Park will enhance property values along the river corridor. The river will become an asset, encouraging environmentally sensitive, high quality design and development at its edge, for both new projects and redevelopment.



Bicycle path along the Platte River in Denver

Public Process Summary

An important goal of the planning process was to engage the public and build upon the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the Conceptual Plan. Central to this effort were monthly meetings and workshops with the San Diego River Coalition; these meeting were open to the public and well-attended by community members.

In addition, two public workshops and two public meetings invited broader community input; these meetings assisted the Civitas team in confirming key issues, exploring planning options and drafting recommendations.

The public outreach effort included:

- Meetings with adjacent communities
- Meetings with elected officials
- Public forums (three, associated with key project phases)
- Individual telephone interviews with stakeholders
- Information on the San Diego River Park Foundation web site (www.sandiegoriver.org)
- E-mail announcements
- Promotional video aired on SDTV announcing the project, upcoming public meetings and sources of information
- Formal and informal presentations to planning groups and park and recreation organizations including the Citizens Advisory Committee of Mission Trails Regional Park, the Mission Bay Park Committee, and communities in and adjacent to the valley

Regular meetings with a Technical Advisory Committee also played a major role in the process. These meetings included key City of San Diego, San Diego County, and City of Santee staff, as well as representatives of the San Diego River Park Foundation.



Exploring the San Diego River



Citizen Advisory Committee Public Workshop

Current Citywide Planning Policies

The planning area for the San Diego River Park encompasses three City Council districts and lies within or is influenced by fifteen community planning areas. The San Diego River Park also intersects the planning boundaries of two major parks and several regional planning entities, including the San Diego Watershed Urban Runoff Management Plan, the draft San Diego Natural Resource Management Plan and an Urban Drainage plan currently in study by the Bureau of Reclamation. With such a complex planning and jurisdictional structure, it is important to understand the context surrounding the San Diego River Park. In addition, the SANDAG Regional Growth Management Strategy, and specifically the water quality element of the Strategy outlines programs the may be integrated into City planning and development to support the improvement of the region’s water quality.

This section presents a brief description of the various planning documents in effect along the river corridor, and discusses the relationship between these plans and the San Diego River Park planning process.

The San Diego River Park Draft Master Plan does not intend to supersede or replace existing planning documents. It does propose overarching general guidelines that will promote continuity and a cohesive San Diego River Park character. These guidelines, presented in a later part of this document, include open space and trail buffers, trail conditions, signage and lighting.

San Diego River Park Conceptual Plan

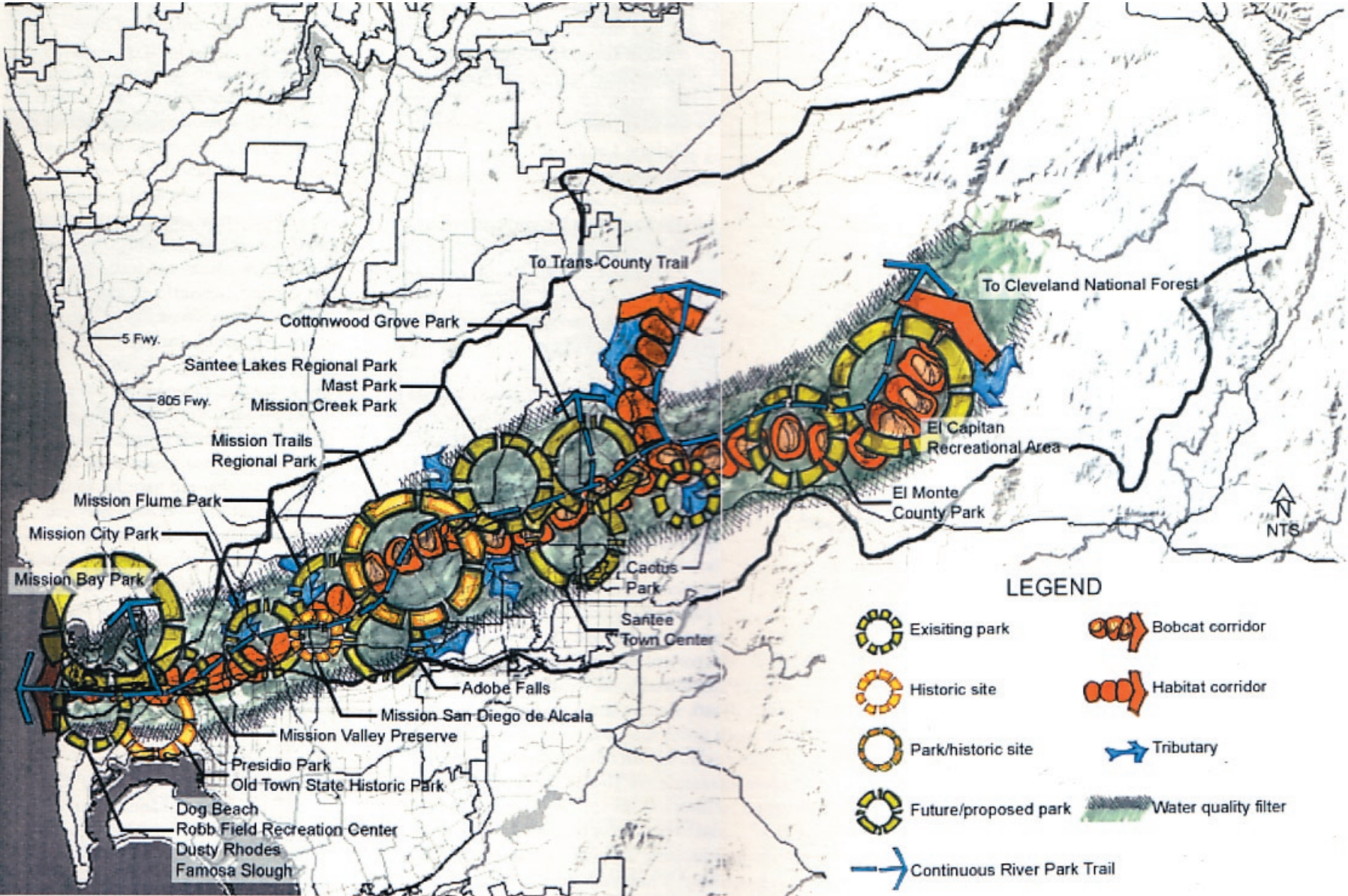
The San Diego River Park Conceptual Plan was initiated in early 2002 by the San Diego River Park Foundation as a means of creating a framework to establish a San Diego River Park along the length of the San Diego River. The Conceptual Plan was prepared by students in the Department of Landscape Architecture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona and completed in June 2002. The plan focuses on the stretch of the river from El Capitan Reservoir to the Pacific Ocean, and is intended to present an examination of the cultural context, water resources, plants and animals, and cultural and educational opportunities upon which an overall vision for the San Diego River Park can be built. The overarching goal of the Conceptual Plan is to assist communities and stakeholders in shaping their vision for the San Diego River Park. The plan seeks to establish a healthy environment for the San Diego River Park, acknowledging both natural and human systems in creating an integrated whole. The Conceptual Plan seeks to achieve this goal by accomplishing the following objectives:

- To conduct an inventory and analysis of the resources and conditions of the watershed.
- To develop a conceptual plan that reflects community desires while enhancing the natural function of the river corridor.
- To develop criteria and recommendations as a guide for design and implementation of the Park as a unified system.
- To illustrate the potential application of the conceptual plan by developing design concepts for specific sites.
- To provide recommendations to implement the Park.

The Conceptual Plan identifies four broad categories of issues- Historic Recognition, Water Management, Habitat Enhancement, and Recreation/Education. Historic Recognition includes the rich history of the river valley and its significance in the settlement of the San Diego region. Water Management explores issues of sediment transport, water volume and water quality. Habitat Enhancement identifies key issues related to preservation of native species and connectivity between open space areas, and Recreation/Education identifies issues of connectivity between parks and access to the river corridor. These elements provide the basic framework for organizing the issues and ideas for the Conceptual Plan and are carried forward in this document.

The Conceptual Plan process included extensive public involvement with the many communities located along the river corridor. This effort included three workshops in February of 2002 and numerous presentations to communities and other groups affiliated with the process. This process led to broad based support for the San Diego River Park and consensus on the critical issues leading to the planning goals and objectives.

More information regarding this plan may be found at the San Diego River Park Foundation web site at: www.sandiegoriver.org.



San Diego River Park - Conceptual Plan

City of Villages - General Plan

The City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan (General Plan), last updated in 1989, established systems across the City of San Diego for phasing the development of new communities concurrent with improvements to public infrastructure. During the 1990’s the City approached build-out with less than ten percent of its area available for development. The Strategic Framework Element, a new chapter of the General Plan, shifts San Diego from a suburban, new growth strategy to one of infill-based redevelopment. The San Diego City of Villages Plan is the central concept of this element. The City of Villages Strategy is designed to address growth and improve existing communities by concentrating civic programs such as schools, employment, commercial and residential into existing metropolitan areas. The in-fill (denser) “villages” would be linked by mass transit.

The General Plan vision states the need for the city to evolve as a place of great cultural and physical diversity. The plan recognizes the need for quality open space, physical, cultural, and social diversity, recreation, and a regional approach to planning. These elements are critical for the city to evolve into a great cultural center in the 21st century. As the City of Villages strategy proceeds, it will become more important to strengthen the open space, bicycle and pedestrian (hiking) linkages south, up to these neighborhoods.

More information regarding this plan may be found at:
<http://www.sannet.gov/cityofvillages/vision/indes.shtml>

Multiple Species Conservation Program

The San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Final Plan identifies Mission Trails Regional Park and the East Elliott area as one of sixteen biological core areas and the San Diego River riparian corridor west of Mission Trails Regional Park as a linkage between them and the Pacific Ocean. The Mission Valley side slopes and the tributary canyons are identified in the City of San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program Subarea Plan as urban habitat areas, which in the study area are not included as part of any of the major planned areas in the Multiple Species Conservation Program Subarea Plan. The majority of urban habitat areas consist of canyons with native habitats in relative proximity to other Multiple Species Conservation Program areas providing habitat. These areas contribute in some form to the Multiple Habitat Planning Areas (MHPA), either by providing habitat for native species to continue to reproduce and find new territories, or by providing necessary shelter and forage for migrating species (mostly birds). These areas contain a mix of habitats including coastal sage scrub, grasslands, riparian/wetlands, chaparral, and oak woodland. The lands are managed pursuant to existing Natural Resource Management Plans, Maintenance Assessment Districts, as conditions of permit approval, or are currently not actively managed. The areas also contribute to the public’s experience of nature and the local native environment.



The San Diego River provides significant riparian habitat

San Diego Watershed Urban Runoff Management Plan

The San Diego Watershed Urban Runoff Management Plan was initiated in January 2003; when completed, this management plan is designed to ‘protect the natural resources within the watershed and ensure sustainability for future generations.’ The plan is intended to assist various agencies and stakeholders in the San Diego Watershed in identifying and prioritizing actions necessary to protect and/or restore ‘groundwater resources, native vegetation, water flows, riparian zones, beneficial uses of waters and overall water quality.’ In accordance with the Municipal Storm Water Permit process, a program has been developed for the San Diego Watershed aimed at increasing the quality of the water resources of the watershed while ‘balancing economic, social, and environmental constraints.’ This program identifies four main objectives:

- develop and expand methods to assess and improve water quality within the watershed
- integrate watershed principles into land use planning
- enhance public understanding of sources of water pollution
- encourage and develop stakeholder participation.

More information regarding this plan may be found at: http://www.projectcleanwater.org/html/ws_san_diego_river_plans.html

Executive Summary

Introduction

Principles

Recommendations

Design Guidelines

Implementation

Appendices

Regulatory Framework

The Clean Water Act and the California Porter Cologne Water Quality Act are the primary federal and state water quality statutes. In the San Diego River Watershed, these statutes are administered by the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board. Pursuant to the governing statutes, water quality objectives are established at levels necessary to protect beneficial uses such as fishing, swimming, and municipal drinking water supply. Together the beneficial uses and water quality objectives comprise the legally enforceable water quality standards applicable to the River. Beneficial Uses and Water Quality Objectives are designated in the Regional Board’s Basin Plan for the San Diego Region. The Basin Plan is a very important Water Quality Control Plan applicable to the entire San Diego Region and adopted by the Regional Board in a formal public hearing. The Basin Plan also includes broad discharge prohibitions applicable to the San Diego River Watershed. A significant state regulatory permit governing water quality in the entire San Diego River Watershed is the Regional Board’s San Diego Municipal Storm Water NPDES permit, Order Number 2001-01. The Municipal Storm Water Permit directs municipalities to implement an urban runoff management program on a jurisdictional and watershed level. Under the Clean Water Act, the Regional Board is obligated to calculate a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for all water bodies / pollutants on the Section 303(d) list of impaired waters. The purpose of a TMDL is to restore an impaired water body to health so that it will once again meet its designated water quality objectives and so its beneficial uses will again be supported and protected. The Regional Board is currently developing TMDLs for every bacteria-impaired water body in the San Diego Region including the San Diego River, Forester Creek, and the mouth of the San Diego River. Following final TMDL adoption, the Municipal Storm Water Permit will be amended to include the TMDL prescribed numeric waste load allocations and reductions needed to ensure compliance with the bacteria water quality objective. The Regional Board also issues permits and provides enforcement authority for all discharges into waters of California.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Army Corp of Engineers also provide a role in protecting wildlife resources and habitat. Through various permitting applications and enforcement authority, these federal agencies are directly responsible for oversight of biological resources and wetland resources respectively. Additionally, the California Department of Fish and Game provides a similar oversight to that of the US Fish and Wildlife Service with the distinction that the former is chartered with protecting the resources unique to California as well as those biological resources found throughout the nation.

San Diego River Natural Resource Management Plan

The City of San Diego is currently finalizing the San Diego River Natural Resource Management Plan (SDRNRMP). The goal is to have a plan that will facilitate the development of sound management practices that are consistent with the goals of the San Diego MSCP Subarea Plan. This natural resource management plan ‘recognizes the value of natural resources along the San Diego River and provides for protection, enhancement, and management of these resources.’ The plan also assists the city by clearly defining the ‘expectations for natural resource protection’ and to facilitate the permitting process at the federal, state, and local level. The plan area consists of the rivers riparian corridor from Interstate 5 to Mission Trails Regional Park, excluding the First San Diego River Improvement Project (FSDRIP) and the Riverwalk Golf Course property.

The overall aim of the SDRNRMP is to provide the City staff with a document that helps to direct current and future management and acquisition activities to maximize benefits to the San Diego River as a natural and cultural resource within the framework of the existing, applicable land use plans.

More information regarding this plan may be obtained through the City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department.



The San Diego River estuary provides critical habitat for a diversity of wildlife

City of San Diego Bicycle Master Plan

The City of San Diego Bicycle Master Plan was created to promote a more bicycle friendly city, and thereby contribute to an elevated quality of life for all San Diegans.

The Bicycle Master Plan cites two primary goals: implement a reliable alternative form of transportation (bicycle) to ease the city’s growing traffic congestion, and increase the city’s quality of life by promoting cycling as a recreational activity. Safety is a primary concern for current and would-be bicycle commuters, making a safe and easily accessible bicycle infrastructure a priority for this planning effort. This infrastructure should meet the needs of both the daily commuter and the casual recreational user.

The Bicycle Master Plan addresses the San Diego river corridor as well as downtown, and identifies connecting the river corridor’s fragmented collection of Class 1 bikeways as a top priority. The Bicycle Master Plan also described peripheral connections perpendicular to the river that link the surrounding communities with the main trail.

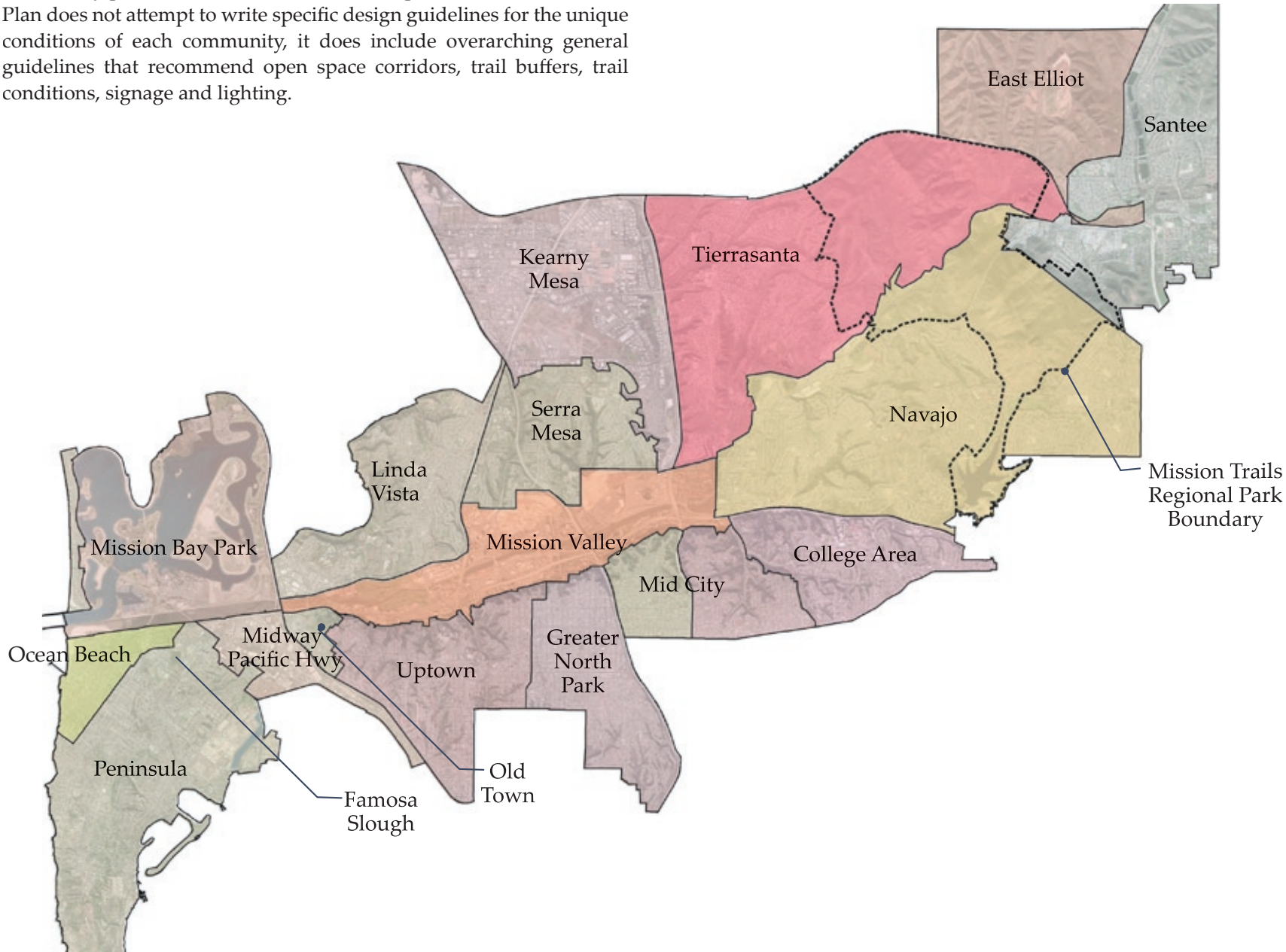
The Bicycle Master Plan was adopted by City Council on May 28, 2002.



Dog Beach provides important recreational space for dogs and their owners

Current Community Plans

Of the fifteen community planning areas in, on or adjacent to the river valley, four are bisected by or adjoin the river itself: Navajo, Tierrasanta, Mission Valley and Ocean Beach. These community planning areas, through their guidelines, can directly influence the relationship between development and the river. This relationship determines the physical character and health of the river. As community plans are updated, the recommendations and general guidelines outlined in the San Diego River Park Draft Master Plan can be integrated into the community plans and serve as tools for its implementation. While this Plan does not attempt to write specific design guidelines for the unique conditions of each community, it does include overarching general guidelines that recommend open space corridors, trail buffers, trail conditions, signage and lighting.



Community Planning Areas

Ocean Beach Precise Plan

The San Diego River is outside the Ocean Beach planning area, but the river does have a close relationship to the community. Residents use the trail along the jetty for active and passive recreation, and Dog Beach is a major attraction to both Ocean Beach residents and other dog enthusiasts throughout the area.

The Ocean Beach Precise Plan identifies several primary issues which must be considered in its future planning. Among these issues is the preservation of the natural integrity of the San Diego River, potential uses of city land, maintenance of beach areas for public access, treatment of mixed use and commercial areas, and the preservation of the sense of community among others.

Ocean Beach is a regional resource valuable for its beaches and recreational facilities as well as its unique community character. Recreational areas such as Ocean Beach Park, Dog Beach and Robb Field are heavily used active recreational areas which, while serving a great number of citizens and tourists, are still unable to meet all of the recreational needs of Ocean Beach and its surroundings.

The Ocean Beach Precise Plan was first approved in 1975 with revisions in 1983 and 1986 and an amendment in 1991.



Dog Beach

Mission Valley Community Plan

The Mission Valley Community Plan identifies the San Diego River floodway as well as the surrounding canyon and hillside landscapes as major assets in the creation of an open space system available to all San Diegans. The Mission Valley Plan seeks to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the unique physical environment of the valley in creating a ‘quality regional urban center, while recognizing and respecting environmental constraints and traffic needs, and encouraging the valley’s development as a community.’

While the plan recognizes the potential to establish a unique environment in the City of San Diego, it also notes several conditions which must be considered in future planning efforts. Foremost among these issues is flooding, a significant problem for the surrounding communities. Impacts of development along the river and throughout the watershed must be carefully considered. While the river can provide a significant scenic amenity, development must in turn protect that resource by paying careful attention to the sensitive habitat and species of the river corridor.

The Mission Valley Community Plan was adopted by City Council in 1985 and amended at various times over the following years. An additional update is slated for release in 2005.

More information regarding this plan may be found at:
<http://www.sanmet.gov/planning/profiles/missionvalley/shtml>

Tierrasanta Community Plan

The Tierrasanta plan generally describes a low density residential community. The presence of commercial areas are designated only where necessary to support the residential community, and the presence of industrial activity is limited to a small, isolated site. The plan seeks to capitalize on the open spaces of the canyonlands interspersed throughout the community as well as the expansive open space resource of the nearby Mission Trails Regional Park.

The San Diego River runs along the majority of the Tierrasanta Community Plan’s southern planning boundary and is primarily considered in two ways: flood control and recreation.

The Plan also identifies a need to regulate existing sand and gravel extraction operations in order to avoid any negative impact on the San Diego River, its habitat or recreational activities.

The Tierrasanta Community Plan was approved in 1981 and amended in 1991.

Navajo Community Plan

The primary goal of the Navajo community plan is to ‘retain the residential character of the area’ while providing basic services which enhance the day to day lives of its residents, such as police and fire protection and open space amenities. The plan recognizes the delicate balance between the community and the San Diego River. Much of the community’s runoff finds its way to the river and the occasional flooding of the river impacts future land use planning in the floodplain.

The plan includes specific language for the design of structures within the 100-year floodplain, suggesting that such buildings keep their low-rise sections nearest the river with higher sections appearing in tiers further from the river. The plan also calls for a continuous trail along the San Diego River. This trail is described as being a minimum of 10 feet wide and placed within the minimum 20 foot setback. It is also designated that all structures within 150 feet of the 100-year floodway will provide at least one pedestrian access path from the main trail to the structure.

The Navajo community plan was approved in 1982, and amended in 1989 and 2002.



Navajo Canyon in Navajo Community Area



Mission Valley



Elanus Canyon in Tierrasanta

Current Related Plans

The San Diego River Park planning area intersects four park or resource planning areas, passing through Mission trails Regional Park, the First San Diego River Improvement Project (FSDRIP), Mission Bay Park and abutting the north edge of Famosa Slough. The San Diego River Park Draft Master Plan supports these successful plans and the planning effort for the River Park must continue to partner with the leadership of these entities as it moves toward implementation.

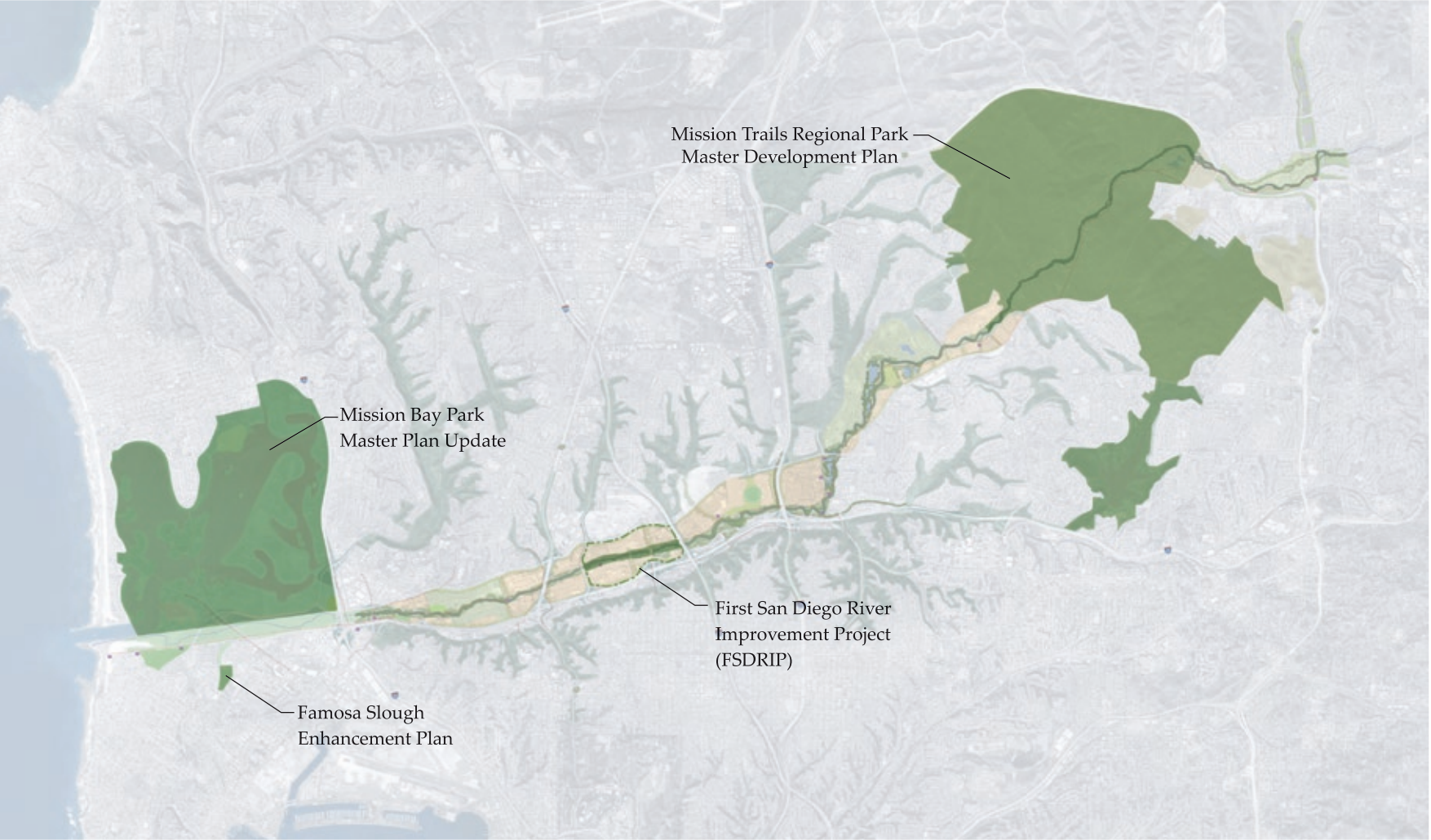
Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan

Mission Trails Regional Park is an important partner in the San Diego River Park process that will link the river valley’s existing and future parklands.

The Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan defined four major elements of the Park’s mission:

- The Park has a multi-purpose role serving recreational, educational and cultural needs of the region;
- The Park is made up of five unique areas (West Fortuna Mountain, East Fortuna Mountain, Mission Gorge, Cowles Mountain and Lake Murray);
- The Park should have an outward, regional orientation rather than a closed, inward orientation; trail linkages are a key component of this outward focus;
- The Park should respond to environmental issues and build upon unique site opportunities (river, vegetation, sense of enclosure) while also acknowledging site constraints.

The Mission Trails Regional Park Master Development Plan also identifies several planning and design goals that parallel the intent of the San Diego River Park Draft Master Plan. These goals include trail linkages from Mission Bay Park to the Cleveland National Forest, and to an inter-regional park loop. Also aligning with San Diego River Park goals, the Master Development Plan stresses management and enhancement of native wildlife habitats and water flow, the need to cluster recreational uses in appropriate locations, and the Park’s role in serving a diversity of needs. Native plant communities in the Mission Gorge should be managed by removing invasive species and selectively replanting native tree species such as California sycamore, cottonwood, and coast live oak to supplement the existing forest.



Current Related Plans

The Master Development Plan identifies Mission Gorge in particular, offering opportunities for remote picnicking and exploring the rich riparian habitats, as “possibly the most valuable resource” of the Park.

Lake Murray, Cowles and Fortuna Mountain Regional Park Master Development Plan was approved by San Diego City Council and San Diego County Board Supervisors in 1977. The Park was renamed Mission Trails Regional Park in 1979 and a second Master Development Plan was approved in 1985 by the San Diego City Council and the San Diego Board of Supervisors.



Mission Trails Regional Park



FSDRIP Pond



FSDRIP Trail

First San Diego River Improvement Project (FSDRIP)

FSDRIP is the mitigation site for a 100 year flood control project that was completed in 1988 and funded through an agreement with property owners who benefited from the flood control. Located in Mission Valley, the project encompasses the area between Qualcomm Way and Highway 163.

In the 1970's, winter flooding limited the potential for land owners in this area to develop their properties, prompting the idea to channelize the San Diego River to move flood waters rapidly through the valley. After approval of the project, the property owners entered into an agreement with the City of San Diego that assured them that development of their property could proceed. In exchange, the property owners agreed to fund the necessary flood control improvements and its continued maintenance.

Under the Federal Clean Water Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers replanted and preserved 26.8 acres of riparian woodland, 9.7 acres of freshwater marsh, and 8.7 acres of open water within FSDRIP. As a requirement of FSDRIP, a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) was prepared that addresses four areas of use within the FSDRIP boundary: natural habitat, flood control, utility corridor, and public uses. The purpose of the NRMP was to establish 100 year goals to provide guidance for the protection of natural resources, maintenance of original permit goals, and remedial measures to re-vegetate disturbed natural habitats. The plan also delineates acceptable public and recreational uses within the area.

FSDRIP was approved in 1987 and was completed in 1988. In 1995 the California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers agreed that vegetation efforts had progressed well and FSDRIP could be considered successful.

Mission Bay Park Master Plan Update

Once part of the estuarine delta of the San Diego River, Mission Bay (historically known as False Bay) was a vast tidal marsh coursed by the braided river until the 1852 construction of the Derby Dike on the south side of the river channel prevented flow into San Diego Bay. In the 1940’s dredging was initiated to turn Mission Bay into an aquatic park and tourist attraction to diversify the City’s economy. Today the San Diego River Estuary lies within the boundary of Mission Bay Park and serves an important role in the provision of wildlife habitat within the Park. The fundamental goal of the Mission Bay Master Plan update was to identify new demands on the park in response to the regional population growth and evolving recreational activities. The Plan acknowledges the many demands and activities within its bounds with a notion of “parks within a park”, identifying regional-oriented recreation, commercial-oriented recreation, neighborhood-oriented recreation and habitat-oriented recreation as the key components and purpose of the Park. The Plan addresses the river minimally, identifying it as a habitat-oriented recreation area adjacent to a “rustic” perimeter of coastal vegetation as an edge along the river dike. The current plan indicates that the land use between the river and the Bay east of Seaworld is to be park land, coastal landscape, and overflow parking.

The Mission Bay Master Plan was updated in 1994.

Famosa Slough Enhancement Plan

Originally part of the San Diego River/False Bay (Mission Bay) estuary, the tidal influence on Famosa Slough has been restricted by flood control structures. Today I-8 remains a barrier between Famosa Slough and the San Diego River, cutting off hydrologic, biologic and pedestrian connection between the two. The original flood gates have been replaced and remain open most of the time. The Friends of Famosa Slough operate the gates monthly to ensure proper operation and are responsible for closing them in the event of a flood. This change in the waterway’s function has resulted in salinity levels and inundation frequencies that have varied over the years. Urban runoff has also impacted the Slough, creating several habitats, including some that are non-native and invasive.

The Enhancement Plan recommended a series of actions primarily intended to improve the biology and hydrology of the Slough, as well as provide an opportunity for education and limited human access. Implementation of the Enhancement Plan is not complete, but has been successful thus far.

The Famosa Slough Enhancement Plan was completed in 1992.



Mission Bay - De Anza Cove



Famosa Slough